

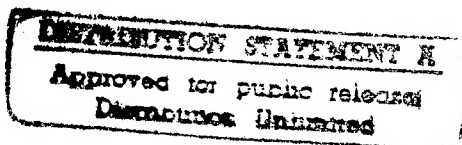
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COMMAND, COMMUNICATIONS, CONTROL AND INTELLIGENCE:

THE ROLE OF THE JOINT TASK FORCE IN THE WAR ON DRUGS

by Donald K. Miskill, Jr.
Commander, U.S. Navy

14 May 1990

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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, R.I.

COMMAND, COMMUNICATIONS, CONTROL AND INTELLIGENCE
The Role of the Joint Task Force in the War on Drugs

by

Donald K. Miskill, Jr.

Commander, U.S. Navy

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War college in satisfaction of the requirements of the Operations Department.

The contents of the paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: /s/

14 May 1990

Paper directed by
Colonel Theodore L. Gatchel, USMC
Chairman, Operations Department

Abstract of

COMMAND, CONTROL, COMMUNICATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE: Keystone in the War on Drugs

The issue of fighting drug abuse has come to the forefront of our list of national security priorities. A major part of this "war" is an attempt to stop the flow of drugs into the United States from the source countries. As the federal government focused more attention to and national assets on this effort the need for better coordination among the numerous agencies involved became immediately apparent. A unified Command, Communications, Control and Intelligence (C3I) network was paramount to effectively employing the myriad personnel and equipment dedicated to Drug Surveillance and Interdiction, and hopefully conducting a successful campaign. The goal is to interdict and confiscate inbound shipments of drugs, or prevent their successful transshipment through deterrence. In response to this need for unified C3I, the FY 1989 National Defense Authorization Act designated the Department of Defense as the lead agency for the detection and monitoring program targeted against the aerial and maritime traffic attempting to bring drugs into the United States. Commander Joint Task Force FOUR (CJTF-4) in Key West, FL, Commander, Joint Task Force FIVE in Alameda, CA and Commander, Joint Task Force SIX in El Paso, TX were established to direct the anti-drug surveillance efforts in the Atlantic/Caribbean, Pacific, and Mexico border areas respectively. The Joint Task Forces have been operating with assigned and supporting assets since October, 1989. After almost nine months of operations, two questions need to be answered: How well are they working? And, how effective have the Joint Task Forces been?

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In order to answer the questions, "How well are the Joint Task Forces doing?" and "How effective are their efforts?", we must look at the four elements of their charter - Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence. The joint task forces faced several problems at their inception, the most difficult being the integration of several autonomous law enforcement agencies and military assets into a cohesive force. It is important to remember that the law enforcement agencies are the only forces authorized to conduct drug interdiction operations. All Department of Defense (DOD) assets are assigned to the Drug Detection and Monitoring Program. In certain instances, a law enforcement agent may operate from onboard a U.S. Naval vessel, but U.S. Military personnel are restricted from that mission by the Posse Comitatus Act. I will focus on the operations of Joint Task Force FOUR (JTF-4), where I was assigned for five weeks in September/October 1989 to set up and initiate USN P-3 maritime patrol operations in support of JTF-4. I have updated my observations to reflect the changes that have occurred since then. The reader should concentrate on the complexity of JTF-4's mission, and the relationship of the various forces involved in drug detection, tracking and monitoring, and for some - interdiction.

CHAPTER II

COMMAND AND CONTROL

There are four elements which impact JTF-4's ability to execute its mission:

- o CJTF-4 control of aircraft, ship and radar assets assigned
- o Geography
- o The national/state law enforcement agencies involved
- o International coordination

Commander, Joint Task Force FOUR has a multitude of assets operating in his area of control (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1

DRUG SURVEILLANCE AND INTERDICTION ASSETS

AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING

(2) E-3 AWACS (Air Force)
(8) E-2 HAWKEYES (Navy & Coast Guard)
(2) P-3 AEW (Customs)
AEW Aerostats - Fixed station
LAND-BASED RADAR SITES

AIRBORNE MARITIME PATROL

(8) P-3 (Navy & Naval Reserve)
(3) S-3 (Navy)
(2) C-130 (Coast Guard)
(2) P-3 (Customs)

MARITIME PATROL

USN PHM'S
CARIBBEAN SQUADRON (COMCARIBRON) ASSETS
USN SHIPS AS ASSIGNED BY CINCLANTFLT
USCG CUTTERS/PATROL BOATS
INTERCEPT BOATS (CUSTOMS/DEA)
MOBILE AEROSTATS

DRUG SURVEILLANCE & INTERDICTION ASSETS

CUSTOMS/DEA AIRCRAFT & HELICOPTERS
US ARMY AIRCRAFT & HELICOPTERS
USCG HELICOPTERS

It is important to remember that in several instances CJTF-4 has advisory control only. That is, the supporting agency retains operational control of their assets. For example, the Coast Guard Districts (7 & 8) retain operational control of their ships and aircraft, as do DEA and Customs. In these cases, CJTF-4 works through the controlling agency to coordinate scheduling of assets and recommended search areas. In the cases where CJTF-4 has operational control (USN P-3/S-3/E-2) they can deal directly with the units involved. Additionally, it means that aircraft and surface assets are operating under more than one operational order and communications plan (see Chapter III).

AEW aircraft assets are distributed to operating bases throughout the Caribbean area. Their primary responsibilities in the southern operating areas are to detect aircraft coming out of Colombia en route to air drop zones in the Bahamas or off the coast of South Florida or Puerto Rico, or to transshipment points in other countries. AEW aircraft operating in the areas north of Cuba and in the Bahamas monitor the aircraft attempting to enter the United States for remote strip landings or coming into an air drop zone.

Airborne Maritime Patrol assets operate from US and overseas bases. They operate alone or in conjunction with surface assets in the surface surveillance role. USN P-3's also operate as the primary transition platform linking air interdiction assets with maritime interdiction assets in the open-ocean, air-drop scenario. All customs/DEA intercept aircraft have limited range, radar and communications capabilities and thus, cannot perform that mission.

USCG cutters and patrol boats, and USN ships assigned to COMCARIBRON carrying a law enforcement representative perform both surveillance and interdiction missions.

The USN hydrofoil patrol boats (PHM) are used primarily in an interdiction role because of their speed. They have limited operating ranges because of fuel.

FIGURE 2{1}

Major Southern Drug Smuggling Routes

Major Southern Drug Smuggling Routes



Source: U.S. Customs Service, 1989.

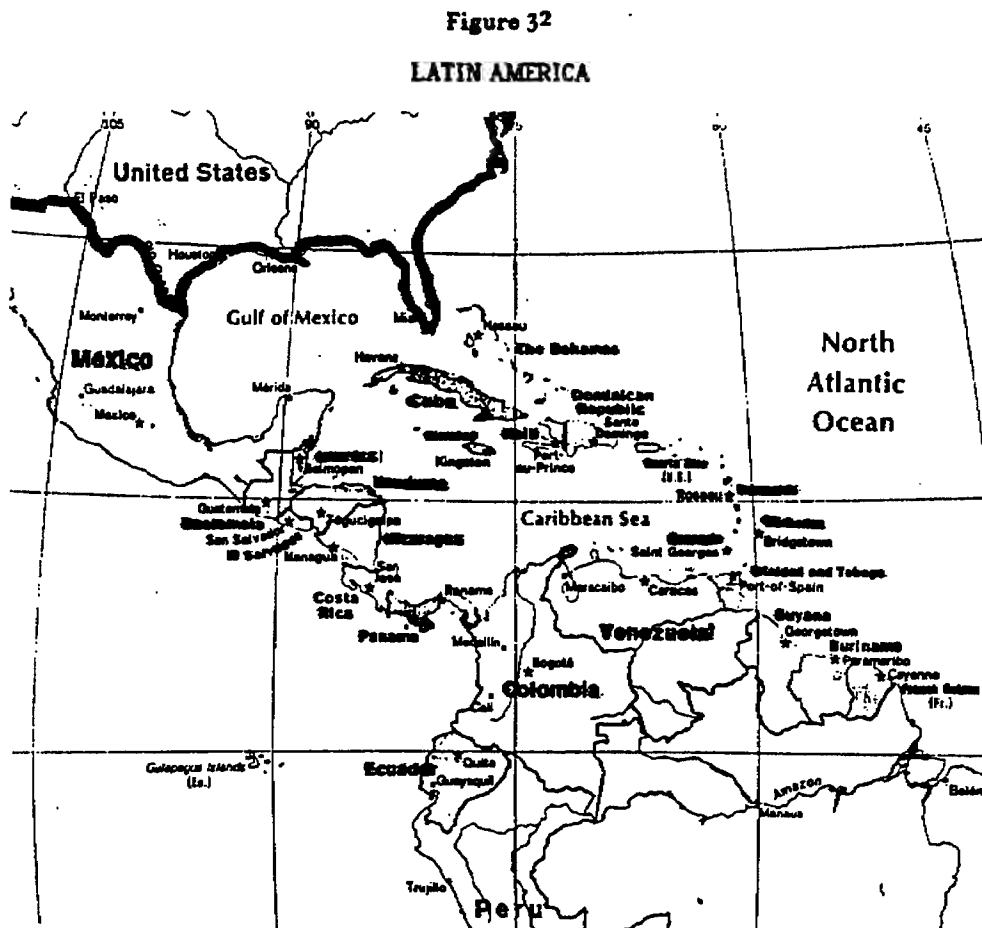
Figure 2 graphically depicts the complexity of the interdiction problem. Clearly, one can see that the closer to the source we can gain initial detection, the easier the tracking problem and, ultimately, the successful interdiction of the drug shipments.

A review of the Caribbean area (Figure 3) shows that international borders, a large seraglio area and few operating bases make numbers and placement of

airborne assets difficult, in order to provide 100 percent search-area coverage while maintaining real-time communications for command and control.

FIGURE 3{2}

LATIN AMERICA



It also complicates the coordination problem for aircrew briefings, flight following, real-time contact reporting, post-flight debriefing and analysis of photo intelligence.

Aircrews must be attuned to standoff distances and alert for interception by

border nation aircraft. In the case of military surveillance aircraft/ships, their standoff ranges may be greater than civilian agency aircraft/ships in order to maintain a non-hostile posture with foreign nations. Proper asset mixes and search-area planning can eliminate this factor.

The operational strategy has broken the Caribbean area into three zones{3}:

- Departure Zone - adjacent to the coast of the producing or transshipment nations (territorial waters).
- Transit Zone - airspace and ocean outside the territorial sea of foreign countries and customs water of the United States.
- Arrival Zone - the destination of smugglers inside the customs waters of the United States. (FOOTNOTE)

It is in this arena that a host of federal and state law enforcement and US military agencies must operate:

- CJTF-4 - responsible for overall coordination of command, control, communications and intelligence.
- U.S. Military - providing detection and monitoring search assets to operate primarily in the transit zone.
- U.S. Customs - may operate in the transit and arrival zones. They have enforcement authority from the U.S. Shoreline out to 12 miles.
- U.S. Coast Guard - may operate in the transit and arrival zones. Has jurisdiction from the U.S. shoreline onto the high seas up to but not including foreign territorial waters. It enforces all federal laws including customs statutes (concurrent jurisdiction) in U.S. customs waters, and has exclusive jurisdiction beyond 12 miles for US vessels. Foreign vessels are consensually boarded with ship master.
- Additional Agencies-
 - Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA)
 - Federal Bureau of Investigation
 - State/Local Law Enforcement
 - Foreign National Enforcement

In the case of the DEA, their international purview can mean that their operations will involve coordination with all of the other agencies depending on where they begin their detection and monitoring evolution. Normally, DEA operations are stand alone evolutions, from initial detection all the way to seizure of the shipment regardless of where the seizure occurs.

The international nature of the operating area presents possibly the most difficult aspect of this entire problem--there are over thirty countries along the littoral of the Caribbean sea. In order to gain early detection on and maintain continuous surveillance of inbound suspect ships and aircraft, it is absolutely essential that coordination between the JTF commanders, DEA and the Department of State be a part of daily routine. Actively involved country teams are vital to obtaining and relaying critical intelligence and coordinating host nation law enforcement efforts when interdiction/seizure operations occur within territorial waters or on foreign territory. They can negotiate possible refueling and/or operating sites for surveillance assets. This would reduce transit times and increase on-station times for more effective asset utilization.

Failure to maintain that proper coordination was clearly evident in the recent attempt to place a carrier battle group off the coast of Colombia. While not having specific knowledge of the diplomatic exchanges, the tone and conviction of Colombia's response would indicate that we either misread the government's feelings on this issue, or did not conduct sufficient diplomatic exchanges to ensure the operation could proceed as planned.

A positive example of international coordination is Operation Bahamas and Turks and Caicos [Islands] (OPBAT). It involves DEA agents, USCG helicopters and Bahamian defense-force personnel. OPBAT maintains helicopters on strip alert in the Bahama Islands ready to fly when alerted by air search radar. The

program has achieved a high degree of success. However, the lack of complete air search radar coverage has limited its effectiveness.{4} The Coast Guard is closing the radar gaps with the addition of two "Fat Albert", high-altitude air search aerostats.

Clearly, formation of the joint task force has simplified a complex asset employment problem. JTF-4 is able to coordinate search area planning and search platform mix to maximize search area coverage and asset utilization. All of the supporting agencies maintain a liaison office at JTF-4 headquarters, and the operations duty officer conducts daily liaison with all of the supporting agencies as he develops the search plan for the entire operating area.

CHAPTER III

COMMUNICATIONS

Unified secure communications is the third area which requires a significant amount of time and effort to produce a unified drug monitoring and interdiction program. There are five areas of impact:

- o compatible hardware
- o secure communications
- o frequency plans
- o utilization of call signs
- o Data link

The diversity of aircraft and ship assets made communications hardware interoperability the first hurdle to be cleared. Individual platform radios covered every area of the frequency spectrum, VHF-FM, VHF, UHF, HF, SATCOM, and Datalink. Since the drug surveillance and interdiction assets range from large surface ships and four-engine aircraft to small, twin-engine aircraft and open cockpit fastboats, it is impossible for all the platforms to carry identical radios. Therefore, the selected search area, multiple search platforms in a single operation, and distance from shore stations demand careful attention by search planners to ensure compatibility and maintain connectivity to shore-based operation centers. It is important to pick an appropriate scene-of-action commander who can communicate with all the players involved. This will usually be the USCG surface ship or the P-3 Orion since they are the most well-equipped communications platforms.

The air interdiction scenario has the most difficult coordination operation from a communications standpoint. This scenario normally entails interdicting an aircraft which is going to drop its load over a precoordinated spot in the ocean for further pickup by high-speed boats; land at a remote airstrip; or drop its load

over a predesignated land target. These operations involve a large number of aircraft, helicopters and surface ships from different agencies all operating in relatively close quarters, and not all on common communications frequencies. It is critical to have an AEW asset on station to ensure safe separation of aircraft, and to have a P-3 or S-3 to establish a gridlock between the aircraft tracking assets and the maritime interdiction assets.

The requirement for secure communications necessitated the development of a new cryptographic keylist strictly for use by law enforcement agencies, and an attempt to outfit all aircraft and surface vessels with secure communications equipment. Secure communications maintain the covertness of ongoing tracking evolutions and air intercept operations, and protect intelligence information sources. The greatest difficulty lies in attempting to outfit the small drug interdiction fastboats with secure communications. In certain instances, unsecure communications are tactically more expedient, however, those operations still require a degree of prior coordination to establish daily changing, commonly used nomenclature to maintain a minimum degree of covertness.

As secure communications interoperability improves so does the effectiveness of detection and monitoring operations. Satellite communications (SATCOM) appears to be the most important surveillance communications link since it is already installed on many DOD aircraft and major USN combatants. USCG cutters are using portable army field units which have proven to be quite effective.

Currently, the drug interdiction forces operate under several frequency plans which increase command and control difficulties for CJTF-4. As was stated earlier, Coast Guard surface vessels remain under the operational control of their respective district (7 & 8) commanders and their requisite frequency plans.

Aircraft and surface vessels reporting directly to CJTF-4 operate under the JTF-4 Frequency Plan. Finally, certain interdiction evolutions operate under a separate frequency plan. While it is impossible to operate with multiple frequency plans, the controlling agency must keep JTF-4 informed as the operation progresses, and they must ensure that all contact reports and any intelligence gained is forwarded to JTF-4. The scheduling officers and search area planners at JTF-4 must ensure that aircraft and surface vessels are given the correct frequencies in their daily tasking.

Concomitantly, the various frequency plans also mean varied secure callsigns. Some controlling authorities use daily changing callsigns to maintain covertness by preventing drug traffickers from monitoring routine (non-secure) communications to develop positions on the interdiction vessels, or know when surveillance aircraft are operating and where. Other agencies change callsigns on a less frequent basis because of the nature of their operations and the number of participants involved. In this instance, daily changing callsigns would induce a significant confusion factor which could adversely affect the proper conduct of the operations. While secure communications are the preferred operating mode, required use of non-secure communications necessitates ongoing operational deception and operational security programs to maintain the security of drug surveillance and tracking operations.

Datalink represents a significant enhancement to command, control and communications. While it is primarily a military system, certain aspects are being adapted for the civilian law enforcement agencies and the Coast Guard. Of primary importance is the establishment of an interagency information exchange. The Narcotics Information network between CJTF-4 and the joint

Customs and Coast Guard C3I center at Miami is the essential link for the real-time exchange of information. There are several subordinate link nets which, while not directly connected to CJTF-4, enhance the overall detection and monitoring network.

Navy P-3/S-3/E-2 aircraft, Navy surface vessels and Air Force AWACS aircraft are Link 11 compatible, and maintain a link network with the U.S. Navy's Caribbean Radar Operations Control Center (CARIBROCC) located at NAS Key West. The link capable platforms can relay information from non-link equipped platforms to CARIBROCC who, relays the information to CJTF-4 and vice versa.

The ground radar stations located in the Bahamas and the fixed-site, high altitude (25,000 feet) AEW aerostat balloons are tied into the C3I center at Miami. However, balloons and radars do not negate the need for AEW aircraft assets. When the balloon is down for maintenance or severe weather, or a radar is down, AEW aircraft must cover the gap in order to maintain the integrity of the surveillance coverage. The North American Aerospace Defense (NORAD) System maintains direct links between the NORAD Sector Operations Command Center at Tyndall AFB, FL and the C3I center at Miami. The mobile aerostats operate at low altitudes (2500 feet) and are primarily targeted against maritime surface targets. They do not have direct connectivity to C3I. The aerostat ship works with several patrol boats as an autonomous unit, and all targeting information is forwarded to C3I.

Individual agencies are seeking additional funds to resolve the significant communications issues. JTF-4 provides inputs in support of those requests by identifying the most critical priorities. Frequency compatibility problems are being resolved with the individual agencies involved to provide commonality.

CHAPTER IV

INTELLIGENCE

This is the fourth area of coordination critical to effectively conducting the war on drugs. The myriad agencies involved all gather intelligence in the course of their daily operations. The difficult part is collecting and correlating intelligence from the numerous agencies, and disseminating photographic information and fully analyzed data.

CJTF-4/J-2 personnel are able to provide that centralized control. They have access to all source intelligence within DOD, including national assets, and are in the Joint Narcotics Network with the El Paso Intelligence Center and the Joint C3I Center in Miami. Additionally, the increased use of Navy P-3 and S-3 aircraft brings dedicated surveillance assets to the drug war with all the requisite know-how. These aircraft and crews are specifically trained in surveillance, search and target tracking. They have excellent photographic and electronic intelligence collection capabilities which are rapidly expanding available intelligence resources.

Designating DOD as the lead agency for coordinating intelligence allows the military to control release of sensitive compartmented intelligence and protect critical national sensor capabilities. Military intelligence specialists can screen sensitive information and correlate it with general intelligence collected by other, less sensitive sources. This enabled them to provide important guidance for effective employment of assets in search-planning and when possible, release specific information.

CJTF-4 has equipped other operating bases with secure telephone equipment and secure photographic/facsimile equipment to facilitate real-time

exchange of intelligence information. This ensures surveillance aircrews have the most up-to-date intelligence and photographic information before their flights and that post-flight intelligence data and photographs can be rapidly forwarded to CJTF-4/J-2 for analysis and dissemination.

The U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Customs Service C3I Center--East, working with other law enforcement agencies and CJTF-4, monitors, tracks, analyzes and interdicts air/marine smuggling traffic from the Virginia coast through the Bahamas, the Florida Keys and the Gulf of Mexico. It integrates real time information from the FAA, NORAD, USCS Marine radars and correlates it with computerized intelligence data. The C3I Center can communicate with drug interdiction assets, state and local law enforcement agencies and JTF-4.

The Drug Enforcement Agency develops its own intelligence through its agents and is primarily a function of the cases it is working on. This makes its intelligence data particularly sensitive. As was stated earlier, the DEA handles its cases from beginning to end and generally ask that other law enforcement agencies remain clear. This means they (the DEA) are reluctant to release any specific information at all to outside agencies until a case is completed.

Both the U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Customs Service develop and analyze their own intelligence data. They share intelligence through the C3I centers and with JTF-4 directly when surveillance assets are in communications with the JTF-4 Operations Center.

The CJTF-4/Country Team relationship is extremely important to the drug intelligence effort. Country teams facilitate gathering of critical departure zone intelligence and in some instances, transit intelligence at intermediate transshipment points. They help develop human intelligence (HUMINT) sources in

the host nation and their analysis of the host nation's own law enforcement efforts will determine releasability of critical information which could compromise HUMINT sources or compromise sensitive intelligence capabilities and preclude development of new HUMINT sources.

In summary, all the major law enforcement agencies (USCG, Customs and DEA) and CJTF-4 maintain their own intelligence networks and databases. The key to success is the sharing of intelligence information among the various agencies.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

There is no question that the establishment of the Joint Task forces has brought unity of command to the Drug War. Yet, that in itself is not enough. The diversity and number of agencies involved, coupled with the fact that they all remain independent, makes daily commitment to resolve the problems of command and control the number one priority. The solution to the problem would be to have everyone assigned to Joint Task Force FOUR, however, no one expects that to occur since law enforcement and the military are mutually exclusive under current federal law. But that has not meant that JTF-4's efforts have been ineffective. On the contrary, it is through their direct daily liaison that the majority of the issues have been favorably resolved or work-around solutions have been developed. Unquestionably, JTF-4's efforts have improved asset utilization and maximized search area coverage. They have provided support for additional funding in surveillance assets and communications equipment. In the area of communications they have been able to resolve frequency plan conflicts to a significant degree, and have identified equipment shortfalls.

Intelligence is probably the area in which the most progress has been made. DOD is coordinating the utilization of national assets, the major intelligence centers are linked together and exchanging information on a daily basis and outlying operating bases have been provided with the secure communications and facsimile equipment to ensure timely preflight briefing and postmission reporting.

In Summary, Joint Task Force FOUR has made a difference in the drug surveillance and monitoring program. There is certainly room for further

improvement in the future, but they have had a significant positive impact in a short period of time.

As to the effectiveness of JTF-4's effort to stem the flow of illegal drugs into the United States, that is a more difficult question to answer. VADM Irwin, Commander Joint Task Force FOUR, readily concedes that "No one has developed a valid measure of effectiveness." {5} That is because JTF-4's responsibility is to conduct surveillance of and track suspect aircraft and surface vessels. It is the responsibility of the law enforcement agencies to interdict and apprehend the drug traffickers. Thus, if JTF-4 assets successfully handoff their targets that could theoretically be called a success. In reality, the real goal is to reduce/stop the illegal shipment of drugs into the United States. In that light, I think Joint Task Force FOUR has been quite effective. "The amount of cocaine coming in through the Caribbean has been greatly reduced. The number of (attempted) air drops is way down. The number of successful air drops is very, very few." {6}

FOOTNOTES

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